

SEEGC ASSOCIATION PROPOSAL

September 16, 2013

The Special Education Employees of Grundy County are support personnel who have devoted their careers to caring for the most vulnerable of all public school children. The special education students who sit in our classrooms depend on us to provide not only educational support, but to care for complex physical conditions and other medical issues. The pay for these positions is shamefully low and is a reflection of the value placed on these students by the districts who comprise the Grundy County Special Education Cooperative Board. In an effort to attract and retain quality and trustworthy employees, the SEEGC has made the following proposal. The amount of salary increase proposed is meager and does not reflect the worth of our wonderful students or of the people who are dedicated to them. It is instead, the amount that we know is within the Cooperative budget. It still leaves our people at poverty level wages according to national statistics and with the Board's rejection of this last proposal, we are forced to acknowledge that our students are not now, nor have they ever been, a priority. It is difficult for us to reach any other conclusion when the people rejecting our offer do not work in our classrooms, do not know the families we serve, or the children who depend on us to help them find their way in this world. Each of the Superintendents who sit on the Board is paid well over \$100,000.00 a year. Four of those superintendents have been bargaining this contract and refusing our salary offers. In July, the Board requested mediation and a date was set. The only issues remaining were salary and insurance. In each of the three mediation sessions held, the Board chose to bring in two outside attorneys paid at a rate of \$285.00 per hour to again tell us that we were not worth an additional thirty five cents per hour. In our conservative estimation, the Board has already paid the two attorneys more money for these mediation sessions than ten of our paraprofessionals will receive in a raise this school year. And the amount paid to the attorneys continues to grow.

Therefore, it is obvious to us that the Board's refusal of our last salary offer of thirty five cents does not stem from economic concerns. In fact, the participating districts received notification from the Cooperative this summer that they would each be receiving a rebate. The total amount that will be refunded to the districts this fall is in excess of two million dollars. Two million dollars that was supposed to be spent on the special education students and their programs is now being taken away from them and given to the superintendents to use in their home districts. We asked for a guarantee from the Superintendents that their refunded money would be used on the special education students who are not serviced by the cooperative, but

sit in their home district classrooms. They refused to make this commitment. We asked what the money would be spent on. They refused to answer. Perhaps some districts will end up with a better football field, or a quiet courtyard, or new office furniture. All things our students will never use, experience, or benefit from. So, we must represent those students and be their voice. We must demand a salary that allows faithful employees to remain in the classroom with the students who need them and who will continue to help them grow, learn and thrive.

Association Proposal

Duration: One year

Salary: 3.5 % (35 cents) increase to base, plus experience step

COST: Approximately \$30,000 in new money

Insurance: All employees will become eligible for family insurance on May 1st of their second school year of employment.

COST: As this would only make our people eligible for family coverage approximately three months earlier than the current contract allows, and the Cooperative has a very difficult time keeping employees for two years or longer, we believe this item is cost neutral.